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THE FUTURE OF ASIA

BY DR. YUJIRO MIYAKE

(Editor of "Japan and the Japanese")

JAPAN seems to be the only country rising to any degree of independence and prominence in Asia, a fact which the Japanese themselves firmly believe and which the world is disposed to admit. And yet, when the Japanese contemplate the great changes likely to take place in Asia they are not wholly optimistic of the future.

The population of Asia is so vast and prolific that it will hold the majority of the world's people for some centuries to come. But as intelligence and skill count for more than numbers it is a question what position Asia may be expected to occupy as to the world's balance of power. Hitherto Asiatic countries have changed, so far as they have changed at all, diversely and independently according to their racial traits and history. But at present great changes are going on in all the countries of Asia simultaneously, and the trend of the transformation is already apparent. It is a change more colossal, far-reaching and profound than any that has taken place in the past. China, India and Turkey are undergoing radical metamorphosis, and the world is looking on with profound interest, wondering where it is going to end. The changes going on in Asia are due to irresistible influences from outside, and not least among these will be the influence of the European war. The changes in the countries named have been largely directed from outside, owing to the fact that these lands are not absolutely independent, their fortunes largely relying on other lands. Of course western countries

have had their vicissitudes too, but the changes in Asia will be greater still.

As the European war draws to a close the changes in Asia will become still more accentuated. Just when the war will end no one now can predict; but as to how it will end the Allies at least have no doubt. But whichever way it ends the revolution going on in Asia cannot be stayed. Of course the changes in China are those of most immediate interest to Japan, and next come those in India and Turkey. To the European Turkey is of first interest, but to Japan she is secondary to India and China. The latter being the most important of all to Japan, even the slightest change at once arouses the interest and attention of Japan. Turkey is of most immediate interest to Europe because she is nearest to Europe and no matter how the war ends she will change just the same. And the changes in Turkey will influence those going on in India and China. So that it is not too much to say that no change can take place in even so distant a country as Turkey without affecting the interests of Japan.

Unlike Europe, America will feel the consequences of change in China just as Japan does. The recent progress of marine transportation makes distance of little effect; yet it is more convenient for a country to extend its national influence by land than by sea. Russia was once more influential in China than the United States. Railway connection and communication has a greater effect on popular feeling than steamship connection. This is one reason

why the effects of the European war will influence all Asia and reach even to Japan. And so we repeat that if even so distant an Asiatic country as Turkey be seriously changed by the war, Japan cannot afford to ignore it, since she will also be affected.

But if the Central Powers are defeated Turkey will be ruined. Indeed the Allied Countries have already been discussing the disposal of Turkey. Turkey may indeed be parcelled out among the Powers and as a nation banished from Europe. The United States has long been making Armenia a sphere of active missionary work and after the war she will be more active than ever there. Finally she may obtain the consent of the Allies to occupation of that territory. France may occupy Syria and become the recoverer of Zion. And thus all Turkish territory will be apportioned out among the Allies.

If the Central Powers win, however, the result for Turkey will be quite different, for then her possessions will be extended and she will obtain concessions even in Egypt. With the enlargement of her territory she would begin to emulate the pride of Germany and Austria and perhaps come to the same fate as the Mongol rulers. In that case victory for Turkey might be a greater peril than defeat. The future of Turkey is indeed a question of great interest to Japan.

With an Allied victory India will be more submissive than ever to Great Britain and the dream of her independence will be forever past. England will probably subdue all lands between Turkey and India, and a great colonial empire will rise between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Russia, who was previously not on very friendly terms with England, will be too busy with internal domestic problems to take much interest in the acts of England, much less to interfere with

them. England will have a free hand in the whole of south-western Asia. If Germany wins she will occupy this position, and if she does not take India she will at least exercise a strong influence there. If the war results in a draw, the international rivalry will be much the same as it has been hitherto. The victory of the Allies is essential to England's safety in India. If England should ever lose India the world's balance of power would be lost.

In the past India has been under England and Turkey under Germany, and China has been left at the mercy of all the Powers. A question of vital importance is how China will be affected by the war. If the Allies win, England and America will clash in China; and if the Central Powers win Germany will reach China through Turkey and collide with American interests there. Germany would do all in her power to oust America in China, but that would be quite impossible, as neither could very well fight there, and so they would probably agree to a partition of spheres of influence. So no matter which way the European war ends, China will be influenced more and more by the United States, who will rely chiefly on her vast financial resources. China being in awe of wealth, will regard America as her leader in thought and politics. At present China is filled with disorder owing to ignorance of democratic principles, but gradually her leaders will come to decide matters more according to American standards.

With victory for England, India will come more and more into line with British ideals and gratify her desire for independence in the direction of greater self-administration and government. If China is able to maintain herself as a republic, after the manner of America, India will undoubtedly be influenced by it and Washingtons will probably appear there. To attain independence may prove a hard

struggle for India, but if she be given self-government, she will no doubt attain it in time. And if India and China become republics, will not Turkey be induced to follow suit? And if Russia forms a republic the greater part of Asia will have renounced monarchy. If the majority of Asiatic peoples favour democracy and achieve government for the people and by the people, the result may be a vast confederacy that will effect changes undreamed of for three thousand years. Chinese, Indians and Russians as well as Turks are rich in powers of imagination, and if they can unite to extend their power it will certainly constitute an epoch in the world's history.

Man and his civilization are oldest in Asia; and among the oldest are Babylon, Egypt, India and China. The civilization of China influenced India and Persia, and thence it passed into Europe even. Finally it went around the world through the western hemisphere and came to the East again. On its second trip through Asia it may influence the world far more than it did in its first circuit. The people of Asia are weak in military force and devotion to materialism, but great in thought and spiritual power. The lands where Confucius, Buddha, Christ and Mohamed were born and taught are possessed of a power greater than military force, and may yet be able to change the face of the whole world. They have not much money or anything that visibly impresses worshippers of the things of this world, but they have vast numbers of people, many of whom have brains and souls more significant of real manhood and real living than all the wealth of occidental materialism!

The greatest change wrought in Asia is its attainment of self-consciousness; and it is this self-consciousness that is at the root of the present demonstrations of de-

mocracy in Asia. But democracy means the passing of collective power to the majority; and the majority is usually inferior in wisdom and virtue to the minority, yet it is often found more effective than the minority for promoting harmonious movements. The greater the population the more necessary it becomes to respect democracy and promote its activity. The present war teaches that the most important thing is population, and the next an educated population. Germany could have done little against her present opponents had she not been a populous country well trained. Now if the 850,000,000 people of Asia become self-conscious and begin to display the latent forces of democracy, the whirlwinds, for which Asia has been famous for ages, will grow in magnitude and sweep around the world. The whirlwind of Asia has already circumscribed the globe and is now just starting on its second circuit with greater vehemence than on the first journey. Already it is beginning to effect mighty changes in Asia itself. Japan, like England, being apart from the continent, can decide for herself how far she will submit to the changes suggested. She must be guided by what is advantageous or disadvantageous to her, as regards what goes on in East Asia, and adopt or reject them accordingly. She should, of course, be guided by an altruistic spirit and act in accordance with what is best for mankind as a whole. Japan must see to it that she has some valuable contribution to add to the civilization of Asia amid the changes being wrought therein. And this Japan should endeavour to accomplish without exhausting any of the countries of Asia. It may yet be too early to decide the part that Japan is to take in the mighty transformation, but she should be prepared for it when duty calls her to the task!